

THE STATUS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE AND THE PRESENT STATE OF ITS WORK

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The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature was established by the Third International Congress of Zoology at its meeting held at Leyden in 1895. The functions then assigned to the International Commission were to study existing unofficial Codes and to make proposals to a later meeting of the International Congress for the establishment of an International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

After six years' work, the International Commission submitted a draft International Code to the Fifth International Congress of Zoology, by whom the proposed Code was adopted, with certain amendments, at its meeting held at Berlin in 1901. The preparation of the authoritative French text of the Code and of the official English and German translations thereof was completed in 1904 and the three texts were published in 1905.

At Boston in 1907 the Seventh International Congress of Zoology authorised the International Commission to render *Opinions* on questions of interpretation arising from the practical application of the Code. At Monaco in 1913, the functions of the International Commission were extended in two important directions by the decision of the Ninth International Congress of Zoology (i) to confer upon the International Commission the power to suspend the rules in cases where the strict application of the rules would clearly result in greater confusion than uniformity and (ii) to entrust the International Commission with the duty of compiling the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology*.

As originally constituted, the International Commission consisted of five Commissioners, but in 1898 this number was increased to fifteen. Later it was decided to increase the number

of Commissioners to eighteen, the present number. Members of the International Commission are elected by the International Congress of Zoology, one-third of the Commission (*i.e.*, six Commissioners) retiring at each meeting of the Congress. Retiring Commissioners are eligible for immediate re-election. Vacancies occurring between meetings of the International Congress may be filled by the International Commission itself.

The International Commission have always attached great importance to securing that the principal countries should be represented on the Commission and that, subject to this consideration, the membership of the Commission should include one or more specialists in each of the main divisions of the Animal Kingdom. At the outbreak of war in 1939, the distribution of seats on the International Commission, as between the various countries, was as follows: the United States (4 Commissioners); the United Kingdom (3 Commissioners); Germany (2 Commissioners); and Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Hungary, Italy, Japan and Poland (1 Commissioner each).

The present state of war makes it impossible for the Secretary of the International Commission to communicate with certain of the members of the International Commission, and in consequence it will not be possible for the International Commission to make use of their plenary powers to suspend the rules in any given case until after the war is over, since unanimity in the Commission is required for the use of these powers. In all other matters, the International Commission is empowered to act by a majority and, therefore, can take—and is taking—decisions, notwithstanding the present state of war.

Shortly before the outbreak of the present war, the late Dr. C. W. Stiles resigned the Secretaryship (though not his membership) of the International Commission on grounds of ill-health and on the election of his successor, Mr. Francis Hemming, the present Secretary, the headquarters of the International Commission were transferred from Washington to London. This change rendered it necessary to make new administrative arrangements, including the transfer of the records of the Commission, the raising of funds for the printing of the Commission's publications, etc. At the outbreak of war in 1939, for a time

operations had to be suspended, but in 1942 arrangements were made to resume activities and during the two years that have since elapsed a record number of publications has been issued by the International Commission.

The publications of the International Commission consist of (i) the *Opinions and Declarations* of the Commission, of which together 167 have so far been published, and (ii) the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature*. Thirty-seven *Opinions and Declarations* have been published by the International Commission under the new arrangements and many other are awaiting publication and will be issued as soon as possible. In addition, a start is being made in the publication of an annotated edition of the older *Opinions*, the original issue of which has long been exhausted. The *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* was founded in 1943 as the Official Organ of the International Commission to serve as a medium for the publication of cases submitted to the Commission for deliberation and decision, thereby affording zoologists of all countries an opportunity of commenting on any such proposal before any decision is taken on it by the International Commission.

In addition, the International Commission have made arrangements to publish as soon as possible both the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* and an up-to-date edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. The first of these has never previously been published in book form, while of the latter there does not exist any edition containing the latest amendments approved by the International Congress of Zoology.

The publications of the International Commission are obtainable from the Commission's Publications Office, 41, Queen's Gate, London, S.W. 7.